phares the navigator can readily determine the position of his ship.

As a heraldic device for his book, or possibly for radio-telegraphy in general, the author had the happy inspiration to choose the graph of two superposed electric waves of different frequencies with the axis vertical. The effect is not altogether unlike that of the rod of Mercury with its intertwined serpents. There are not many misprints. On p. 54, however, the formula for the capacity of an ellipsoid is still given incorrectly—possibly because no one uses it. The u^2 should be u.

Sir William Ramsay as a Scientist and Man. By Prof. T. C. Chaudhuri. With an Introduction by Prof. P. Neogi. Pp. ix+66. (Calcutta and London: Butterworth and Co., 1918.) Price 1.8 rupees net.

THIS little book opens with a short but appreciative account of Sir William Ramsay's early life, education, and career, special attention being directed to his earnest efforts to impress on the Government the importance of scientific education and research and the necessity for co-operation between the Government and the scientific societies in connection with the war.

After a brief reference to Ramsay's early work on organic chemistry, and to his researches on physical and inorganic chemistry, there is a fuller account of the discovery of the inert gases.

The last three chapters are devoted to radioactivity, modern views on electrons and elements, and the question of the transmutation of elements, with especial reference to Ramsay's researches and views.

Readers will obtain a clear idea of the great part played by Sir William Ramsay in the development of chemistry, but the portrait is not well reproduced, and there are a few inaccuracies.

S. Y.

The Practice of Soft Cheesemaking. Fourth revision. By C. W. Walker-Tisdale and T. R. Robinson. Pp. 106. (London: John North, 1918.) Price 3*s*. net.

THE revised edition of this small volume appears at an opportune time, as there is a considerable demand for information as to the best means of utilising small quantities of milk. Full working details concerning the manufacture of soft cheeses are given along with chapters upon the production of clean milk, the preparation of cream, and the packing and marketing of the soft cheese. Those unacquainted with the terms used in dairying will find the explanations given in one of the sections of great help, whilst the regulations of the Board of Agriculture will be found useful for reference purposes.

This handbook can be strongly recommended to anybody who proposes to make soft cheese; and whilst some practical instruction is desirable, the directions are given so clearly and concisely that a beginner need not fear to make a start. The authors also give instructions how to make soft cheese from goats' milk.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[*The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of* NATURE. *No notice is taken of anonymous communications.*]

Substitutes for Platinum.

L'INFORMATION donnée dans *Metall und Erz*, et qui est reproduite dans votre numéro du 15 août, souffre d'une insuffisance de documentation qu'il me parait utile de relever.

L'alliage nommé "platinite," employé dans les lampes à incandescence, n'est pas né de la guerre; sa découverte a fait partie de l'ensemble des recherches que j'ai effectuées au Bureau international des Poids et Mesures, à partir de l'année 1896, et pour l'exécution desquelles j'ai reçu l'aide la plus dévouée de la Société de Commentry-Fourchambault et Decazeville. Le platinite est entré dans l'usage courant de certaines usines françaises dès l'année 1900, et s'est répandu peu à peu dans les autres pays. Le détail de cet emploi est donné dans mon ouvrage, "Les applications des aciers au nickel," paru en 1904; je ne crois pas exagérer en disant que l'économie de platine réalisée jusqu'ici grâce au platinite dépasse cinquante millions de francs.

C'est également la Société de Commentry-Fourchambault et Decazeville qui a réalisé pour la première fois, dans ses aciéries d'Imphy, les alliages de nickel à fortes additions de chrome; leurs propriétés sont décrites dans l'ouvrage de M. L. Dumas, "Recherches sur les aciers au nickel à haute teneur" (1902); d'intéressantes applications en ont été faites.

Les métallurgistes américains de leur côté fabriquent, depuis quelques annees, sur la même donnee, l'alliage "nichrome," dont l'usage s'est beaucoup repandu pour la chauffe électrique des appareils de laboratoire. CH.-ED. GUILLAUME.

Pavillon de Breteuil, Sevres (S.-&-O.),
10 septembre 1918.

Future Treatment of German Scientific Men.

I HAVE just read Lord Walsingham's excellent letter in NATURE of September 5, and agree with all he says as to what should be our line of action towards the scientific men of Germany. It is impossible we can meet them just as if nothing had happened since 1914. I quote this sentence (how true it is!):—"It is impossible to dissociate the mental attitude of the population of that country, by no means excepting the highly educated and scientific classes, from the world-conquering aspirations of their rulers, or from the barbarous atrocities committed by them in pursuit of that national ideal."

I have not heard of a single letter from the very large number of the above scientific classes in Germany to acquaintances in this country in which such acts have been denounced, nor have I seen any protest or condemnation of German methods coming from the Germans in our midst, of whom there are many who have enjoyed in this country friendship, hospitality, and even protection, such as no British subject could hope to receive in Germany. Any expressions of this kind would be well known, quoted, and notorious. I think I should have heard of them, although I now lead a very retired country life.

Instead of protecting objects of science and art by leaving them intact for the benefit of other nations and the world in general, the German has raised looting and destruction into a devilish art. Soldiers

© 1918 Nature Publishing Group

are trained, and even the officers led by them, to commit useless destruction, combined with every conceivable atrocity on man, woman, and child. It is lamentable to think of the geological and natural-history collections which have been destroyed in Belgium alone—a country famous for its scientific men, the work of their lives gone for ever. I trust all this will not be forgotten when the war is fought out to a proper issue, and that all Lord Walsingham suggests will come about and just punishment be thus meted out.

The German scientific man has been spoilt by success in the past; he was first in the field in many countries, particularly our own. I knew him in days gone by in India, when he filled the best appointments in the Geological Survey, the Forestry Department, etc. Many were friends of my own. In those days they were quite different men in every way from those of to-day so complete a change has come over the whole German population. It is sincerely to be hoped they will never be employed again in any capacity. H. H. Godwin-Austen.

Nore Godalming, September 17.

The South Georgia Whale Fishery.

A note on p. 470 of Nature for August 15 contains the statement that scientific experts have, until now, not been consulted in the matter of the South Georgia whale fishery, which has been administered entirely by the Colonial Office. There is at present a considerable tendency to criticise Government Departments for failing to make use of scientific opinion, but I feel sure that you will allow me to point out that this particular criticism is not justifiable. The Colonial Office has for some years been fully alive to the fact that the regulation of sub-Antarctic whaling is a scientific problem, and since 1910 it has been in constant communication on the subject with the Natural History Museum. Under arrangements thus made the museum receives detailed statistics from the companies operating at South Georgia, each individual whale caught being separately recorded. Similar statistics are beginning to come in from the South Shetlands (a district almost as important as South Georgia) and from some of the African companies; while promises of returns from other whaling centres have also been received. In addition to this, the Colonial Office furnishes half-yearly and other reports on the whaling operations at the districts under its jurisdiction, and it has received many reports from the museum commenting on the facts thus recorded, and offering advice on the various questions raised.

In the course of 1913 the Colonial Office proposed at a biologist should be sent to South Georgia to take investigations which might contribute towards the solution of the whaling problem. In consultation with the museum, the work was offered to Major G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton, who accepted the task, and reached South Georgia in November, 1913. News of his untimely death, on January 17, 1914, while strenuously occupied with his observations on whales, was shortly afterwards received in London. The manuscript notes which he left behind show that the investigation had been placed in most competent hands, and they have formed the basis of an important report, which is at present under consideration at the Colonial Office. The appointment of Major Barrett-Hamilton had been made as an initial step in a much larger scheme for the investigation of the problems connected with whaling by means of a scientific station to be established for several years on the Antarctic continent. The preparations for carrying out this idea were interrupted by the war.

That the urgency of the question was recognised by Government Departments, and that the need for obtaining scientific opinion was felt, was further shown by the appointment of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Whaling and the Protection of Whales. In August, 1913, the Colonial Office wrote to the Natural History Museum asking for information with regard to the scientific aspects of whaling for the use of this Committee, and a memorandum on the subject was submitted by the museum in due course. The Committee was engaged in hearing evidence during the first half of 1914, but its labours were discontinued on the outbreak of war.

Early in the present year a new Committee was appointed to facilitate prompt action at the conclusion of the war in regard to the preservation of the whaling industry in the Dependencies of the Falkland Islands. This Committee, on which the Natural History Museum is represented, is actively engaged in collecting information, under the auspices of the Colonial Office.

It is sometimes assumed that expert scientific advice is capable of settling any difficult question which may arise within its own province. The solution of the problem of protecting whales is, however, no easy matter; and I doubt whether there is at present unanimity on the subject among scientific experts. The trustees of the British Museum have for some years been convinced of its importance and urgency, and they have welcomed the opportunities afforded them by the Colonial Office of expressing their views and tendering their advice, based on the study which has been given to the subject in the museum. Assistance from those competent to give it would be cordially received, and I am glad to have this opportunity of inviting scientific experts to communicate their views on the protection of whales to the Natural History Museum, and thus to assist in a matter which is not only of great zoological interest, but also one which may be described without exaggeration as of supreme national importance. Sidney F. Harmer.

British Museum (Natural History),
Cromwell Road, S.W.7.

Vitality of Gorse-seed.

Assertions regarding the length of vitality of certain seeds are frequently made, but these, when investigated, often lack proof. Hence it may be worth while to put on record a clear case of the seeds of the gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) retaining their germinating power for twenty-five years.

Some forty acres of gorse- and heather-covered land situated near my home in the plain of Cumberland were drained, cleaned, and ploughed out in 1893. This area was kept in arable rotation for a number of years; then part of it was laid down in grass in 1904, and the remainder in 1906. It soon became evident that this new pasture would rapidly revert to a gorse-covered common unless drastic measures were taken to rid the ground of the numerous gorse seedlings, which had sprung up from the seeds brought to the surface by the last ploughing. These were stubbed out, and in two or three years' time the ground was entirely free of gorse plants, and has continued so for the ten or more years it has been allowed to remain in permanent pasture.

Last winter this land was again brought under the plough by order of the local War Agricultural Committee, and was sown with oats. The crop has now been reaped, and gorse seedlings, 6 in. or more in height, are to be seen scattered over the stubble, being especially abundant where originally the gorse grew strongest. Evidently, then, the last ploughing has

© 1918 Nature Publishing Group